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ABSTRACT

The booklet describes PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS, a project in which parents of handicapped children help other parents understand their rights and responsibilities under state and federal laws. The booklet is intended to help potential adopters modify program aspects for local settings. The model is analyzed in terms of user concerns, program characteristics, minimum standards for replication, and developer-furnished materials (from the PACER Center, Inc.). Five phases of the model are examined: public information and education, workshops for parents of all handicapped children (community-based), workshops for specific groups, advocacy training, and individual advocacy assistance. Additional program aspects addressed are trainees and incentives, necessary conditions for management and staffing, and evaluation. A concluding section cites data on the effectiveness of each of the five phases and considers cost samples. (CL)

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PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS

A PLAN AND A PROGRAM

For reaching and informing parents of handicapped children about their rights and responsibilities under state and federal laws. This is a demonstrably effective and replicable model that is ready for adoption or adaptation. And this is a prospectus for potential adopters.

EC 150 339

The operational base of PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS is the PACER Center, Inc., established in Minneapolis in November 1976 through a coalition of 18 state organizations that share concerns for handicapped children and their parents. PACER's early work was supported by the Minnesota Department of Education. The current PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS project was initiated in September 1978 through a grant from the Division of Personnel Preparation, Office of Special Education, U.S. Department of Education.

Replications of all or part of the PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS model are in progress in:

Alaska
Wisconsin
North Carolina
Pennsylvania
Virginia
Kentucky

Printed in the United States of America
1981

YOU COULD REPLICATE *PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS!*

To find out, just answer each question by circling YES or NO; then count the number of YES answers you gave. The more YES answers, the more your beliefs coincide with the basic assumptions and procedures of PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS, and the more likely it is that your site would meet the minimum standards for replication.

Is there a need to provide information to parents of handicapped children on their rights and responsibilities under current special education laws? YES NO

Is it important to increase public awareness about the laws and needs of handicapped children? YES NO

Can collaborative efforts by coalitions or organizations concerned with the education of handicapped children assist parents in developing satisfactory relationships with school personnel? YES NO

Can parent volunteers be utilized successfully in training and information dissemination and advocacy activities? YES NO

Should parents of handicapped children be included in the planning and implementation of activities related to the rights and education of their children? YES NO

Do you (or does someone in your organization) have a good working knowledge of special education laws? YES NO

Can you operate a program that requires management skills, management activities, and careful evaluation? YES NO

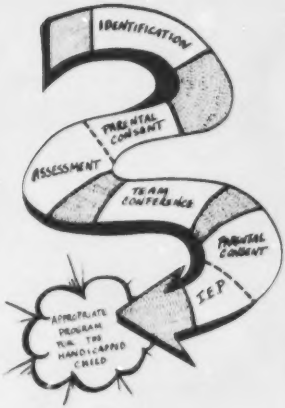
If you answered YES to most of these questions, you may want to see whether PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS will fit the conditions and needs of your state, community, and organization.

Turn the Page for an Overview

MUTUAL ADAPTATION

THE DEVELOPER ASSISTS THE ADOPTER

PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS staff members can arrange a visit to the PACER Center for potential adopters who wish to receive individual training and, when possible, opportunities to observe Levels II, III, and IV training sessions. The developer can also visit potential adopter sites when the adopter has demonstrated specific levels of readiness to adopt certain aspects of the program.



This person-to-person support can be offered if the adopter has:

- Demonstrated that a broadly based coalition effort exists;
- Demonstrated that parents of handicapped children have been involved in planning and will be included in the implementation of ongoing activities;
- Identified possible funding sources for future programming; and specified the kinds of assistance desired from the developer, based on an assessment of parent training needs and proposed goals at the adopter site.

Adopters should also have the potential for reaching parents of handicapped children across their states (or smaller geographic regions), should be knowledgeable about special education laws, and should be concerned with management skills, management activities, and project evaluation.

ADVOCACY TRAINING . . . .

PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS reaches and informs parents of handicapped children about their rights and responsibilities under state and federal laws. In making parents aware of their rights, the program helps them to participate effectively with schools in planning their children's educational programs.

THE PROJECT IS UNIQUE in using the concept of parents training other parents. Most of its staff and trained volunteers are parents of handicapped children. Information services, training, and individual assistance are designed to help parents to understand special education laws and to encourage them in working with schools to develop appropriate programs for their children.

These goals are realized through five levels of activity:

Level I Public Information and Education

Level II Workshops for Parents of All Handicapped Children

Level III Workshops for Specific Groups

Level IV Advocacy Training

Level V Individual Advocacy Assistance

. . . . IN A TRANSPORTABLE STATEWIDE MODEL

In response to nationwide needs for parent training and advocacy models, the personnel of the PACER Center have prepared the PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS practices for adoption or adaptation by others, and the program has been successfully replicated in several locations. (The model could also be used by almost any group that would benefit from assistance in understanding and exercising the rights of its members.) This booklet is intended to help potential adopters match these practices to their local needs, conditions, characteristics, and resources. The following pages summarize:

User Concerns. The sorts of questions that a potential adopter should ask about a program in order to determine whether its qualities and requirements are suitable to his site, organization, constituents, and consumers.

Program Characteristics. Attributes of the program and information that are related to user concerns.

Minimum Standards for Replication. The basic parts of the program that are essential to its success; these parts must be adopted with fidelity at the new site (as opposed to other parts which are flexible and may be adapted).

The last pages present the PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS demonstration of effectiveness in summary, along with some sample workshop costs.

THE OVERALL MODEL

USER CONCERNS	*PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS*
What are the components of the model? Could some components be adopted without others?	**There are five levels (or components) of service:** **Level I.** PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION informs the general public of the special needs of handicapped children and makes parents of handicapped children aware of available services through a variety of media in local communities across the state. **Level II.** WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS OF ALL HANDICAPPED CHILDREN (COMMUNITY-BASED) are designed to provide parents of handicapped children with information to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under current special education laws. A workshop flyer is distributed and project personnel cooperate with local contact people in target communities in order to involve the maximum number of parents in workshop training. **Level III.** WORKSHOPS FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS are specialized sessions offered as a result of parents' requests or stated needs. This level of training is often presented to special interest groups, such as parents of preschool children. **Level IV.** ADVOCACY TRAINING is provided for parents who are committed to informing, advising, and counseling other parents in the future. These sessions prepare them to be parent advocates and to assist in the delivery of workshop training to other parents. **Level V.** INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE involves the provision of information and assistance to individual parents and professionals regarding parents' and children's rights under current special education laws. Many telephone and mail requests for information are answered, and Level V services are also useful to participants who are unable to attend workshops.
Is the training competency based?	The Level IV training model is the competency-based component (in which learning activities are designed to guide participants in achieving performance objectives).
Is the program designed to allow participation by bilingual, bicultural, and minority groups?	Procedures are built in to reach minority, bicultural, and bilingual communities for Level II and Level III training. Leaders of minority communities are included as participants in Level IV training and materials for bilingual communities are being developed.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REPLICATION

Successful adoption or adaptation would include at least:

Level I. The activities for publicity on the program and workshops.

Level II. Workshop for Parents of All Handicapped Children (Community-Based).

Level IV. Advocacy Training activities involving the training of parents as workshop presenters.

NOTE: Level I is in itself a public information model and could be adopted without training components for purposes of public awareness of laws and the needs of handicapped individuals. In addition, the Level IV training model has individual applications for pre-defined target audiences and is not exclusive to parents of the 0-21 population.

Adopters must use procedures to ensure that public information reaches minority groups. It is also necessary to include members of minority groups in Level IV training and on the program's advisory board for decision-making.

DEVELOPER-FURNISHED MATERIALS

- *A four-page program description flyer*
- *Journal reprints describing the model*
- *Evaluation reports*
- *Workshop packets*
- *Transparencies for use in training sessions*
- *An outline of the Level IV training sequence*

- *Publicity flyer in Spanish*
- *Additional bilingual materials are in development*

LEVEL I. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

USER CONCERNS	PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
Who are the target recipients of information?	All information is intended for parents as ultimate recipients but is prepared to be useful to many other interested parties and to the public at large.
What is the content of the information that is distributed?	Content focuses on project services and concepts, changes in legislation, information on issues and parent concerns.
Does the program perform a Child Find function (identifying unserved children in the district or state)?	Publicity efforts attempt to promote Child Find activities, with emphasis on parents of preschool handicapped children in all information activities.
What is the extent of the clearinghouse operation that develops?	There is a flow of information on legislation and referral sources for parents, with capacity for rapid response to requests for information. Frequency of inquiries increases with the life of the project and in relation to changes in legislation and related events.
What media are used for distributing information?	Information is conveyed via statewide radio, television, and newspapers; through mailings; via a newsletter produced by PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS and the use of newsletters of other agencies and organizations; by speeches before disability groups, professional groups, and civic groups; in national publications; through brochures and magazines.
In what formats must information be prepared?	Information is prepared for: news releases, radio and television public service announcements, releases to advocacy organizations and other groups, articles in newspapers and magazines, professional articles, publicity information for workshops, program information for brochures and speeches, information on issues and parent concerns for newsletters.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REPLICATION

Adopters must use a comprehensive plan for reaching parents and the public.

Information must be current on issues and changes in legislation.

It is essential to maintain an up-to-date information file on federal and state legislation and referral sources for parents, including information on books and other written materials, as well as information on local programs and services.

Adopters need to develop an expanding set of contacts with major media and professional publications, the house organs of other agencies and organizations, and media resource people.

Adopters need to increase the variety of information formats as the project develops.

DEVELOPER-FURNISHED MATERIALS

Publicity packets that include:

- *Sample public service announcements for radio and television, with instructions (written and on videotape)*
- *Sample news articles*
- *Sample workshop flyers*
- *Sample brochures*
- *Sample newsletters*
- *The PACER slideltape presentation*
- *Samples of information in various formats, with instructions*

LEVELS II, III, IV. TRAINING WORKSHOPS

USER CONCERNS	*PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS*
What are the scope and sequence of training activities?	**Sequenced training agendas provide for:** • Rights and responsibilities of parents of handicapped children (Levels II and III); and • Advocacy, assertiveness techniques, parent-school communication (Level IV). **Parents are taught to utilize procedures that will lead to changes necessary for their for their children's educational programs, including:** • Due process • Complaint procedures • Compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 • Skills in communication
What methods of instruction are used?	**Methods of instruction include:** • Lecture • Small group discussions • Use of audio-visual materials • Simulations
How are trainee needs assessed?	To assess trainee needs, questions are posed during workshops to determine matters of immediate relevance. In terms of needs for future training and assistance (and for program improvement), other information is elicited in workshop evaluation forms and by means of follow-up surveys of participants.
What is the duration of training?	Level II and Level III training consists of a short-term session of 3 to 5 hours, day or evening. Level IV consists of two day-long sessions. (Participants will have previously attended a Level II workshop.)

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REPLICATION

Adopters should use developer-furnished packets and other training materials as the basis for training content and sequence, supplemented with materials pertinent to the given state and other adopter-selected materials.

The adopter must be able to take Level II and Level III workshops to local communities. Level IV can be presented in a central location or in a number of regions throughout the state.

DEVELOPER-FURNISHED MATERIALS

- *Training packets for Levels II, III, and IV*
- *Transparencies for Levels II, III, and IV*
- *Simulation exercises*
- *PACER slide/tape presentation*
- *Workshop outlines and agendas*
- *Instructions for small group discussions*
- *Evaluation instruments*
- *Follow-up survey instruments*
- *Sample evaluation reports*

LEVEL V. INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE

USER CONCERNS	PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
What sorts of management and coordination are needed for the parent-consumer helping system?	Procedures make it possible for requests for individualized assistance to be recorded by staff members and answered within one week, if by phone, and in a little more than a week, if by mail. Ninety percent of assistance is provided by phone and mail; the remainder is delivered person-to-person. Individualized assistance is supervised and reviewed by the director or co-directors.
What methods are used and recommended for relating to public school personnel?	Staff members and trained volunteers provide direct assistance to parents in resolving disagreements regarding their children's Individual Education Programs, through meetings, conferences, and other communications with school personnel. Parents learn communication skills for working with school personnel. Parents are assisted in the use of the Individual Education Program conference, due process procedures, state complaint system, 504 complaint system, and formal informal contacts with state education agency and state special education advisory boards.
What resources are necessary for information and referrals?	Major sources of information and referrals are: • Referral lists, updated regularly • Shelf materials • Lists of information on local, state, and national resource and referral services

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REPLICATION

The adopter must use a formal system for receiving, answering, and recording inquiries and for documenting assistance given.

It is also essential to adhere to rules and procedures that pertain to confidentiality of records and information.

Staff members and trained volunteers must be skilled in identifying problem issues and communicating effectively and productively, and must be able to assist parents in developing or improving these same skills.

A staff-coordinated information retrieval and storage system must be developed and used.

A management plan for staff communication and for updating of information must be developed and used.

DEVELOPER-FURNISHED MATERIALS

- *Sample intake form*
- *Printed information on various disabilities*
- *Book lists*
- *A "parents' rights booklet"*
- *Copies of federal and state statutes*
- *Advocacy lists*
- *Lists of resources and organizations*
- *List of library books and materials for parent use on loan*

TRAINEES AND INCENTIVES

USER CONCERNS	PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
Who is eligible for training?	The majority of persons trained should be parents of handicapped children and individuals working for disability organizations and advocacy groups. However, all interested persons from the schools and the community should be included.
What recruitment procedures are used?	**Trainees enroll on the basis of:** • Publicity for workshops; • Project files on persons interested in training and subsequent contacts; • Public information and education activities; and • Local liaison work by recruiters.
How many people can be trained per session?	Level II sessions can include up to 100 participants, with at least four trainers. The ideal situation is 40 to 50 participants, with three trainers. Level III sessions include 5 to 50 participants with one or two trainers.
What trainee incentives are necessary?	Trainees do not pay for any services or materials. • Level IV trainees who assist staff at subsequent workshops receive expenses and a $50 honorarium for each workshop. • Foster parents receive credits toward ongoing education programs through county welfare systems. • Level IV participants may be eligible for continuing education credits, depending on arrangements with colleges and universities.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REPLICATION

Primary audience must consist of parents of handicapped children, but workshops must be open.

Successful recruitment depends on extensive publicity and personal contacts through local liaison people.

The recommended trainer:trainee ratios should be maintained for all workshops.

Trained volunteers must be reimbursed for their expenses when assisting in project activities.

DEVELOPER-FURNISHED MATERIALS

- *Sample brochure*
- *Sample flyers*
- *Sample publicity packet, with instructions*
- *Volunteers' expense reimbursement forms (samples)*

NECESSARY CONDITIONS/ MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

USER CONCERNS	PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
What kinds of linkages and collaborative arrangements must be made?	The program is a collaborative effort by a coalition of state-wide organizations commonly concerned with the education of handicapped students. Effective linkages and cooperative relationships are developed with schools and with major resources on a local, state, and national level.
What kinds of resources are necessary?	Staff members and advisory board members are viewed as good resources and productive participants in school planning and other advisory groups; they should also have well defined contacts with individuals representing national and state resources for information, referrals, and advocacy. Ideally, the sponsoring organization is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation with a board of directors representing various disability areas. The program is facilitated by federal, state, and or local support for referrals, publicity, consultation, and funding.
How are training and services distributed across a state?	Training delivery is based on: population distribution in the state, equality of service to all regions, and parents' requests and interests.
How is the planning, development, and implementation of the program managed?	In program development and implementation, the staff relates to the directors, and directors relate to the advisory board. Yearly goals are prepared by the staff under the direction of the board of directors. Activities are developed on a monthly basis for each program year.
What is the staffing pattern?	Ideally, the staff includes a director or co-directors, two parent trainers, one secretary, and two to three part-time trained volunteers. Volunteers from all disability areas assist with Levels II, III, and IV, with clerical work, and with the development of materials. The majority of the staff travel to provide training.
What facilities and equipment are necessary?	The program needs office space, standard office equipment (including a photocopier), and access to meeting rooms for training activities.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REPLICATION

The sponsoring organization should collaborate with at least five major organizations and/or disability groups within the state or local area to form a coalition. The advisory board should be selected from representatives of disability groups in the coalition. Ongoing informal contacts and positive relationships with public school personnel are also essential.

Members of the coalition, directors of the sponsoring organization, and advisory board members should have knowledge of national, state, and local resources to bring to bear on the goals of the program.

An organization chart, definitions of activities, and timelines must be developed and used.

The majority of the staff should be parents of handicapped children, working on flexible time schedules. Most of the staff must be willing to travel for workshops, presentations, and conferences. Staff members should have good communication skills.

All training sessions must be held in accessible buildings.

DEVELOPER-FURNISHED MATERIALS

- *Sample Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, policies, and board meeting minutes*
- *Written description of the ways by which the program can enhance the roles of school personnel*
- *List of appropriate current resources*
- *Sample organization chart*
- *Sample annual schedules, by month*
- *Sample position descriptions*
- *Sample personnel policy statements*

EVALUATION

USER CONCERNS

How is the success of the program evaluated?

Is trainee feedback used in evaluation?

Are evaluation results available?

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

Detailed documentation of all activities is done in order to gather evidence of effectiveness, and also reveals needs for program modification. Data gathering and reporting procedures have been designed.

Trainee feedback for Level II is in the form of workshop evaluations and follow-up phone calls; for Level III, workshop evaluation; for Level V, follow-up phone calls and advocate reports of school conferences. (Level I's Public Information and Education are evaluated by cataloging articles from a news clipping service, answers to intake requests, and workshop questions.)

Complete evaluation results are collected in annual reports to the advisory board, funding sources, and other interested parties. Evaluation results are also reported in the program's demonstration of effectiveness document.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR REPLICATION

The adopter must establish a method of documenting numbers of parents reached, parents' perceptions of the program, and other information, and must use these data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program.

Workshop evaluation forms are required.

DEVELOPER-FURNISHED MATERIALS

- *Survey instruments*
- *Advocate report forms*
- *Evaluation forms*
- *Annual reports*
- *Demonstration of effectiveness document*

DEMONSTRATION OF EFFECTIVENESS: SUMMARY

The five levels of PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS activities have created broad *awareness* of and interest in these services throughout the State of Minnesota. Parents and others involved in *workshops* acquire useful information, and parents feel more confident in dealing with the schools. Most participants in *advocacy training* felt they had developed skills, and virtually all of them reported subsequent involvement in either formal or informal advocacy activities. Of parents who received individual *advocacy assistance*, most found the information helpful, felt more involved in program planning for their children, and felt that the information helped them to obtain needed services. The sections below briefly present evidence of effectiveness in each of these areas, and a more complete report of effectiveness and evaluation results is available from the PACER Center.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION. News releases placed in a number of different media reached an estimated audience of 3.3 million in 1978-79 and 3.8 million in 1979-80 and in 1980-81. This resulted in 1,477 intakes during 1978-79, 3,568 during 1979-80, and 4,370 during 1980-81; the great majority of these were from Minnesota. In addition, a total of 137 presentations on parental concerns were given a total audience of approximately 5,600 educators and community people who are not parents of handicapped children.

WORKSHOPS. Evaluation forms were used at most workshops, and follow-up calls were made to a sample of 160 parents over three years (50 in 1978-79, 60 in 1979-80, and 50 in 1980-81). The great majority believed that the information presented was useful to them (88%, 96%, and 92%). The great majority also felt more confident in dealing with the schools (98%, 96%, and 82%). Moreover, 18%, 16%, and 21%, respectively, indicated a desire to receive advocacy training. The need for those workshops is demonstrated by the fact that most were scheduled as a result of requests from schools and parent groups (89%, 91%, and 92%). In response to demand, 147 workshops were given to a total of 4,375 persons.

ADVOCACY TRAINING. A follow-up survey of advocacy trainees in 1980 and 1981 indicated that most felt they had developed more training and advocacy skills (88% and 97%). Virtually all reported participation in a variety of advocacy activities (99%), listing an average of nine activities per person. Activities included both formal and informal advocacy, such as helping parents, speaking to educators and others, writing letters and newspaper articles, membership in advocacy groups, and giving testimony on special education issues. A number of persons also reported that they helped to organize special interest groups (27% and 10%) or helped an existing group to become more active or stronger (29% and 31%). When only parents of handicapped children are considered, these percentages increase, with 33% of parents organizing new groups and 42% reviving existing groups (according to 1980 data).

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE. Follow-up calls were also made to parents who received advocacy assistance (50 calls in 1978-79, 60 in 1979-80, and 50 in 1980-81). Almost all found the information useful (92%, 95%, and 96%). As a result, a large majority felt more confident in working with the schools (88% in 1979-80 and 84% in 1980-81) and felt more involved in their children's educational programs (77% in 1979-80). Finally, and most important, a large majority felt that the information they received helped them to obtain some of the services that their children needed.

COST SAMPLES

Costs of implementing the PARENTS TRAIN PARENTS model will vary according to staff salaries, facility costs, and the number of practices of the program that are adopted. The developer can work with adopters to establish clear cost projections. The following workshop costs are presented as examples of training costs for fixed numbers of trainees (which in reality will vary) and a fixed location (which will also vary).

LEVEL II WORKSHOP FOR 50 PARENTS

	$	
One staff member		(Salary)
Two trained volunteers	100	
50 Workshop packets ($5 each)	250	
Workshop space rental and coffee	50	
Mileage and meals for staff	50	
Transparencies (one-time-only cost)		(200)
Total	$450	plus salary and portion of transparency cost

LEVEL IV TRAINING OF 30 TRAINERS

	$	
Three staff members		(Salary)
One trained volunteer	50	
30 Level IV kits	200	
Workshop space rental and coffee	50	
Mileage and meals for staff	50	
Total	$350	plus salaries

FORM A LOCAL COALITION

- *Meet with parents in your local school district*
- *Attend school board meetings, – give school district parents' views and perception*
- *Attend special education advisory board meetings to find out what's going on*
- *Work on improvement of services*